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# HORACE MANN

BY

WILLIAM TORREY HARRIS, LL.D.

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## NOTE

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## HORACE MANN

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The educational history of our country is divided roughly into two epochs—that of rural and that of urban education. This is also the struggle that is going on now—to eliminate rural methods and supplant them by urban methods. For it often happens that a city grows in population but is slow to avail itself of the opportunity that a large population and accumulated wealth afford for superior methods of instruction.

Rural and  
city educa-  
tion

The number of cities within the United States containing 8,000 inhabitants and upwards was in 1790 only 6 ; between 1800 and 1810 it increased to 11 ; in 1820, 13 ; in 1830, 26 ; in 1840, 44. In the fifty years between 1840 and 1890 it increased from 44 to 443, or ten times the former number. The urban population of this country in 1790 was, according to the superintendent of the census, only one in 30 of the population ; in 1840 it had increased

Increase in  
cities

to one in 12 ; in 1890 to one in 3. In fact, if we count the towns on the railroads that are made urban by their close connections with large cities, and the suburban districts, it is safe to say that now one-half of the population is urban.

In sparsely settled regions a district of four square miles will furnish only twenty, thirty, or forty children of school age ; and it follows as a matter of course that the schools were small, their annual sessions very short, the funds to pay teachers scarce, the teachers themselves poorly educated and not professionally trained. For the first forty years of this nation such was the condition of nine-tenths of all the schools. By 1830 the growth of cities began to be felt.

As villages grew, and after the railroad had connected them to the large cities, bringing them into contact with urban life, graded schools began to exist, and to hold an annual session of ten or eleven months. This required the services of a person whose entire vocation was teaching. One of the chief defects of the rural district school was to be found in the fact

that the man who taught the winter school took up teaching as a mere makeshift, depending on his other business or trade (surveyor or clerk or farmer, etc.) for his chief support. There was small chance for the acquirement of any knowledge of the true methods of teaching. Another evil more prominent than the former was the letting down of standards caused by the low qualifications of the average committeeman. The town as a whole could afford a school committee of high qualifications; the average district rarely. The township system therefore attains a far higher standard of efficiency than the district system.

When the village began to catch the urban spirit and establish graded schools with a full annual session, there came a demand for a higher order of teacher, the professional teacher in short. This caused a comparison of ideals and the most enlightened in the community began an agitation of the school question, and supervision was demanded. In Massachusetts, where the urban civilization had made most progress, this agitation resulted in the formation of a state board of education in 1837

Professional  
teachers

and the employment of Horace Mann as its secretary (June, 1837). Boston had been connected with Providence and Worcester and Lowell by railroads before 1835, and in 1842 the first great trunk railroad had been completed through Springfield to Albany, opening to Boston a communication with the great West by the Erie canal and the newly completed railroad from Albany to Buffalo. This was the beginning of the great urban epoch in America that has gone on increasing in intensity to this day.

Horace Mann came to the head of education in Massachusetts just at the beginning of this epoch of railroads and the growth of cities. He attacked with unsparing severity the

Horace  
Mann's ear-  
liest work



evils of the schools as he found them, these evils being chiefly the survivals of the rural school epoch. The school district system, introduced into

Connecticut in 1701, into Rhode Island about

1750, and into Massachusetts in 1789, was pronounced by Horace Mann to be the most disastrous feature in the whole history of educational legislation in Massachusetts. Side by side with the new impulse given to education in villages, no doubt the district system seemed very bad. Its evils were manifest in the opposition to central graded schools which were needed in the populous villages, but which would break up the old district lines. Local power is never given up to a central power without a struggle. The stubbornness of this contest on the part of local committeemen was continued long after the adoption of the township system in Massachusetts and elsewhere. The district fought for its "rights" through its representatives on the town board, thereby postponing the feasible consolidation of districts and the formation of properly classified schools.

Let us dwell a moment on this advantage of consolidated or "union" schools as called in New York State and the West. In the rural school, isolated as it was, all grades of pupils from

Graded  
schools

the lowest primary up to the secondary came together under one master, who had to give individual instruction to each, finding only five minutes or a little more for such lesson. Under such circumstances he could not well manage over twenty or thirty pupils.

In his classes, each formed of one pupil  
Larger  
classes in those branches other than reading and spelling, he might have done better teaching had he had two pupils instead of one. For the child learns almost as much from paying attention to the efforts of his classmate to recite as from his own. A skilful teacher can make recitation by an entire class of twenty or thirty pupils of even grade of advancement far more instructive to each pupil than a private tutor can make the same lesson to his one pupil. The other pupils of the class furnish a sort of bridge between the teacher's mind that sees (or should see) the topic under discussion in its relations to all human learning, and the individual pupil's mind that sees the topic in its barest outlines and has scarcely learned its relations to other topics. For each pupil gets some one-sided view of it for him-

self in preparing his lesson, and sees in the class exercise (which we call "recitation" in our American school-technique) many other one-sided views presented by his fellow pupils, who are not likely to repeat his one-sided view, but to have others equally distorted of their own.

Suppose two ungraded schools to be united in one and divided again according to grade; the thirty pupils Longer recitations youngest, and in lowest elementary studies, taken by one teacher and the other thirty pupils taken by the other teacher. One half of the number of classes is saved by consolidation and each teacher has twice as much time for each class exercise or recitation. He can find more time to go into the merits of the subject when he has ten minutes instead of five minutes.

In a populous village, a school of five hundred pupils is collected. There Economy of effort is a teacher for each fifty pupils, making ten in all; for nearly twice as many pupils can be taught by each teacher in a well-graded school as in an ungraded school. Each of these ten teachers divides his fifty

pupils into two classes according to advancement, and classes average a half year's difference in their intervals of progress from the classes above or below. He has thirty minutes for each recitation. It is now possible to promote a bright pupil, who is not finding enough to do in the tasks set for his class, to the next class above. For he can soon make up what he has omitted by the leap from one class to another. So, too, a pupil who is falling behind his class can take up his work with the next class below and find it better suited to his powers.

It was an insight into this principle that led Martin Luther to insist on grading the schools. The Jesuits, who were the first to seize on the chief weapon of the Protestants—namely education for the people—and turn it against them in the interest of the Catholic church, formed a school system in 1590 and also took much pains with grading and classification.

Horace Mann's efforts did not at once abolish the district system in Consolidation of districts Massachusetts, but it prevailed to consolidate districts in populous sections of the State. His school re-



ing of school funds by taxation ; the reports were widely read outside of the State and spread the agitation of the school question into Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York and elsewhere. Connecticut succeeded in abolishing her district system in 1856, but Massachusetts clung to it until 1869, when she got rid of it. In this action she was followed by Maine in 1872. And this is what the State superintendent of Maine says of the evils of the district system, in an able summary :

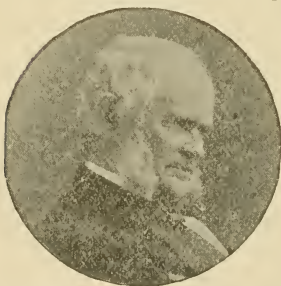
“First, the school moneys were inequably divided, some districts receiving much more than they could profitably expend, others much less than was absolutely needed ; second, poor schoolhouses in remote and sparsely settled districts ; third, short schools, or poor ones, if the agent attempted to lengthen them by hiring cheap teachers. Little money, poor schoolhouses, short schools are the necessary attendants of this system.”

Horace Mann extended his criticisms and suggestions to the examination of teachers and their instruction in institutes ; to the improvement of school buildings ; the rais-

ing of a correct public opinion on school questions; the care for vicious youth in appropriate schools. He discarded the hide-bound text-book method of teaching and substituted the oral discussion of the topic in place of the memorizing of the words of the book. He encouraged school libraries and school apparatus.

Horace Mann's influence aided in founding the first normal school in the United States at Lexington (afterwards removed to Framingham), and a second one at Barre, both in 1839, and a third one at Bridgewater in the fall of the next year.

Inspired by the example in Massachusetts, Connecticut was aroused by Henry Barnard, who carried through the legislature the act organizing a State board of commissioners, and became himself the first secretary of it (1839). In 1849 Connecticut established a



normal school. In 1843 Mr. Barnard went to Rhode Island and assisted in drawing up the State school law under which he became the first commissioner, and labored there for six years.

These were the chief fermenting influences in education that have worked a wide change in the management of schools in the Middle and Western States within the past fifty years.

Let us consider some of those points more in detail and get a little closer to the personality of the hero whom we commemorate. Massachu-  
setts in 1839

There had been in Massachusetts from 1789 to 1839—a period of fifty years—an apparent retrogression of education.

This apparent retrogression—on the whole a healthful movement—was due to the increase of local self-government and the decrease of central, especially parochial authority. It was a necessary and on the whole a healthful movement. The central power had been largely theocratic or ecclesiastical at the beginning. But the reaction against ecclesiastical control went too far in the direction of individualism. The farth-

est swing of the pendulum in this direction was reached in 1828, when the districts obtained the exclusive control of the schools in all matters except in the item of examination of teachers. The public schools diminished in efficiency, and a two-fold opposition began some years before 1828, which took, on the one hand, the shape of an attempt to remedy the deficiency of public schools by the establishment of academies; and, on the other hand, that of a vigorous attack by educational reformers, such as Horace Mann and his devoted contemporary, James G. Carter. The establishment of a State board of education, and the appointment of Horace Mann as its secretary, therefore mark an era of return from the extreme of individualism to the proper union of local and central authority in the management of schools.

Horace Mann's function at this very important epoch was that of educational statesman. We must not permit our attention to be distracted from this point if we would behold the greatness and beneficence of his labors.

Pestalozzi was essentially an educational missionary, a teacher of pupils in the first

An educational  
statesman

grade of the elementary school. Horace Mann was equally an educational missionary, for he consecrated himself religiously to the task of promoting the school education of the people. Other people, all people, select vocations in which they are to work and earn a livelihood. But the missionary consecrates his whole life to a chosen work, not for what it will return to him in wealth or honor, but for the intrinsic worth of the object to be accomplished as a good for the human race.

The enthusiasm of Horace Mann shone out of his soul in his praise of the act of the Massachusetts legislature establishing the State Board of Education in 1837: "This board I believe to be like a spring, almost imperceptible, flowing from the highest tableland, between oceans, which is destined to deepen and widen as it descends, diffusing fertility and beauty in its course, and nations shall dwell upon its banks. It is the first great movement towards an organized system of common education, which shall at once be thorough and universal."

It was he that was to succeed in making that State Board of Education the fertilizing spring that he de-

Board of  
education

scribes. It was a board with limited powers. It could not found schools, nor direct or manage them after they were founded. It should only collect information and diffuse it. It could persuade the people but not command them. In a nation founded upon the idea of local self-government, it was a very great achievement to show what can be accomplished by a board that cannot coerce but only persuade. This is the point of view to see Horace Mann's greatness. One thinks of the potency of Peter the Hermit preaching a crusade. It was a crusade that Horace Mann preached in his twelve reports and in his hundreds of popular addresses, and in his thousands of letters, written with his own hand.

Mann's  
twelve  
reports      The 1st report of Horace Mann as secretary was made in 1837, and contains the best statement ever made of the duties of school committees, especially in the selection of teachers. It sets forth the apathy of the people regarding the schools and regrets the employment of incompetent teachers. (48 pp.)

There was a supplementary report on

school-houses which discussed the matter of ventilation and warming, the proper kind of desks, the location of the building, the lighting of the room, the play-grounds, and the duties of the teacher in regard to light and ventilation. (60 pp.)

In the 2d report, 1838, there is much discussion of the method of teaching reading, whether by letters or by the word method. A just criticism is made upon the character of the school reading books. (60 pp.)

In the 3d report, 1839, he discusses the responsibility of the people for the improvement in common schools, the employment of children in manufactories, the importance of libraries, and the kind of books needed, the effect of reading on the formation of character; and recommends strongly the establishment of school-district libraries. (52 pp.)

The 4th report, 1840, points out the desirability of union schools for the sake of grading and classifying the pupils, and cheapening the cost of instruction. It shows the value of regularity and punctuality in attendance. (40 pp.)

The 5th report, 1841, has a world-wide fame for its presentation of the advantages of education, the effect of it upon the fortunes of men, the production of property, the multiplication of human comforts and all the elements of material well being. He showed how education awakened thought, increased the resources of the individual, opened his eyes to the possibility of combinations not seen by the uneducated. The circular letter which he prepared making enquiries of manufacturers and men of business, is the most suggestive letter of its kind. This report deserves to be published in a pamphlet and placed in the hands of the people of every generation. (37 pp.)

In his 6th report, 1842, he presents the subject of physiology and its importance as a branch to be taught in the schools. (100 pp.)

The 7th report, 1843, records his observations in European schools, and starts endless questions regarding the methods of organization and instruction, bringing into light the questions of corporal punishment and the overcultivation of the memory of words.



He describes in an eloquent manner the evils of a partial system of education, and treats in a judicial manner the advantages and disadvantages of the schools that he found in Scotland, Prussia, and Saxony. (190 pp.)

In the 8th report, 1844, he treats of the employment of female teachers and of the method of conducting teachers' institutes, teachers' associations, and the study of vocal music. (30 pp.)

In his 9th report, 1845, he discusses the motives to which the teacher should appeal ; describes the school vices to be avoided ; points out the transcendent importance of moral instruction ; and shows how obedience should be secured by affection and respect, and not by fear. He treats of the dangers of truancy and the prevention of whispering, and a variety of practical difficulties that meet the teacher in the school-room. He shows how to avoid the evils of emulation, and commends the system of instruction by induction instead of deduction, and the importance of substituting investigation for memorizing. (104 pp.)

The 10th report, 1846, gives the history of the common-school system in Massachusetts, and shows the relation which education holds to the future generations of the commonwealth. (35 pp.)

The 11th report, 1847, makes a strong presentation of the power of the common schools to redeem the State from social evils and crimes. There is a circular letter of inquiry with regard to the effect of education in the prevention of vice and crime. The letter of 1841 had inquired regarding the effect of education upon thrift and industry ; replies obtained to the letter of 1847 gave encouraging facts and opinions in regard to the moral effect of school education. The report continues to discuss the qualifications of teachers and the methods of securing regular attendance of children, and paints a picture of the effect of universal education :

“Every follower of God and friend of human-kind will find the only sure means of carrying forward the particular reform to which he is devoted in universal education. In whatever department of philanthropy he may be engaged he will find that depart-

ment to be only a segment of the great circle of beneficence of which universal education is the centre and circumference." (80 pp.)

The 12th and last report of Horace Mann presents anew the capacity of the common school system to improve the pecuniary condition and elevate the intellectual, moral, and religious character of the commonwealth, repeating with new force the arguments brought forward in previous reports. He shows the importance of religion and the reading of the Bible in the common school; shows the importance of health and the necessity of providing for physical training in the school-room; sets forth the necessity of the schools for the political education of the citizens. His devices to show the use of intelligence gained in the schools to the mechanic, the merchant, and the farmer, seem inexhaustible. (120 pp.)

As a consequence of the seventh report, which sets forth the advantages of the schools of Germany, there arose the famous controversy with the thirty-one Boston schoolmasters.

Controversy  
with the 31  
school-  
masters

In studying the records of Massachusetts

one is impressed by the fact that every new movement in education has run the gauntlet of fierce and bitter opposition before adoption. The ability of the conservative party has always been conspicuous, and the friends of the new measure have been forced to exert all their strength and to eliminate one after another the objectionable features discovered in advance by their enemies. To this fact is due the success of so many of the reforms and improvements that have proceeded from this State. The fire of criticism has purified the gold from the dross in a large measure already before the stage of practical experiment has begun. In reviewing this long record of bitter quarrels over new measures that have now become old and venerable because of their good results in all parts of the nation, we are apt to become impatient and blame too severely the conservative party in Massachusetts.

We forget that the opposition helped to  
Tried as            perfect the theory of the reform,  
by fire            and did much to make it a real  
advance instead of a mere change from one  
imperfect method to another. Even at best

educational changes are often only changes of fashion, the swing of the pendulum from one extreme to another, and sure to need correction by a fresh reaction. Again, it is patent in Massachusetts' history that the defects of old methods were in great part remedied by the good sense and skill of many highly cultured teachers who still practised them, and hence the wholesale denunciation of the old methods was felt to be unjust. The best teachers resented the attack on their methods. It seemed unfair, because it charged against the method all the mistakes committed by inexperience and stupidity; and, because, too, it claimed more for the new device than could be realized. The old was condemned for its poor results in the hands of the most incompetent; while the new was commended as the ideal, without considering what it would become in the hands of unfaithful teachers.

Take as an instance of this the use of text-books. Everyone will admit that what is called the "slavish use" of such means is a great evil. The memorizing of words and sentences without

Use of  
text-books

criticism and reflection on their meaning is a mechanical training of the mind and fit only for parrots. But, on the other hand, the proper use of the printed page is the greatest of all arts taught in the school. How to get out of printed words and sentences the original thought and observation recorded there—how to verify these and critically go over the steps of the author's mind—this is the method of discovery and leads to the only real progress. For real progress comes from availing oneself of the wisdom of the race and using it as an instrument of new discovery. That other method sometimes commended of original investigation without aid from books forgets that mankind have toiled for long thousands of years to construct a ladder of achievement, and that civilization is on the highest round of this ladder. It has invented school education in order that its youth may climb quickly to the top on the rounds which have been added one by one slowly in the lapse of ages. The youth shall profit vicariously by the thought and experience of those who have gone before. For the child of the savage tribe there is no such vicarious thinking and liv-

ing ; he begins practically at the bottom of this ladder and with no rounds on which he may climb.

Now there was in Massachusetts and elsewhere much excellent teaching in the academies and common schools—teaching which trained the pupil to criticise and verify instead of to accept the statements of the book with blind credulity. The good teachers knew that their methods were good, and felt indignant to hear them caricatured and an inferior method recommended as a substitute.

For the merely oral method does not possess in it the capability of producing the independent scholar, <sup>Defects of the oral method</sup> who can be trained holding him responsible for mastering critically the printed page, and making alive again its thoughts and perceptions.

It was a sense of something valuable in the old method that was not touched by the criticisms of Horace Mann, that led to the reply of the Boston masters.

Here we come to the closer view of the character of Horace Mann. He was like so many of the great men <sup>A Hebrew prophet</sup> of the Puritans modelled on the type of the

Hebrew prophets. The close and continuous study of the characters portrayed in the Old Testament, the weekly sermons, most of which were studies of those characters, had educated all Puritans to see ideals of character in ancient leaders who devoted themselves to a cause and withstood popular clamor, fiercely denouncing whatever form of idol worship they saw among their countrymen.

The ideal of a strong, serious-minded, independent manhood, unswerved by personal interest, thoroughly patriotic, and devoted to the public interest, it draws its support from a sense of righteousness that gives it a backbone co-terminous with the axis on which the universe revolves. So long as this character is recognized and respected, and has in the main the support of the community, small and great, it stands firm like an oak, and thrives on the hostility of the elements in the society that it opposes.

But this species of character, modelled on the Hebrew prophet, it should be said, is far more likely to be an inward tragedy than a genuine historical one. The average man



puts on the air of a censor of his age or his community, and develops an overweening egotism ; or he poses as an unappreciated genius for poetry, or philosophy, or philanthropy, or statesmanship, or theology, or ethical purity of character.

The pathway of history for eighteen centuries is strewn with wrecked individualities of men who have become fanatics or cranks through the demoniac possession of a single idea ; and the self-delusion—a suggestion of the evil one—that they are exceptionally wise and gifted above their fellow-men : that they, in short, are right and the world all wrong.

It is saved from being a tragedy in Horace Mann and in other great men before and after who have personified this Hebrew prophet type of reformer, by the greatness of the cause they have espoused and by their self-sacrificing devotion to it.

The Great Teacher gave the one prescription to ward off the fatal disease that attacks this Hebrew individualism, and that prescription is humility and self-abasement. Its intellectual rule is the measure by service of

one's fellows : Be their servant if you would rule over them.

But we have from this ideal the most important fruition of all human history : namely, the development of individualism and the formation of a set of institutions to nurture it.

We have characters that are so strong that they can withstand any amount of opposition from their fellow-men and still stand erect without fear. "One with God is a majority."

Thus Horace Mann was entrenched in his fundamental principle, and on all occasions returned to it to rally his strength. In his own words he describes his conviction, and at the same time lays down the details of his policy and methods of winning success :

"The education of the whole people, in a republican government, can never be attained without the consent of the whole people. Compulsion, even if it were desirable, is not an available instrument. Enlightenment, not coercion, is our resource.

The nature of education must be explained. The whole mass of mind must be instructed in regard to its comprehension and enduring interests. We can not drive our people up a dark avenue, even though it be the right one; but we must hang the starry lights of knowledge about it, and show them not only the directness of its course to the goal of prosperity and honor, but the beauty of the way that leads to it.

“In some districts there will be but a single man or woman, in some towns scarcely half a dozen men or women, who have espoused this noble enterprise. But whether there be half a dozen or but one, they must be like the little leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal. Let the intelligent visit the ignorant day by day, as the oculist visits the blind man and detaches the scales from his eyes, until the living sense leaps in the living light.

“Let the zealous seek contact and communion with those who are frozen up in indifference, and thaw off the icebergs wherein they lie imbedded. Let the love of beautiful childhood, the love of country, the dictates of

reason, the admonitions of conscience, the sense of religious responsibility be plied, in mingled tenderness and earnestness, until the obdurate and dark mass of avarice, ignorance, and prejudice shall be dissipated by their blended light and heat."

He preached the same doctrine regarding the right of the state to educate at public expense that James G. Carter had preached. It is stated in these simple propositions :

1. "The successive generations of men taken collectively constitute a great commonwealth."

2. "The property of the commonwealth is pledged for the education of all its youth up to such a point as will save them from poverty and vice and prepare them for adequate performance of their social and civil duties."

3. "The successive holders of this property are trustees bound to the faithful execution of this trust by the most sacred obligations ; and the embezzlement and pillage from children and descendants have not less of criminality and far more than the same

offences when perpetrated against contemporaries."

The net result of Mr. Mann's labors in his bright career as educational statesman is put tersely by Mr. <sup>What he</sup> accomplished Martin in these words :

"In the evolution of the Massachusetts public schools during these twelve years of Mr. Mann's labors :

"Statistics tell us that the appropriations for public schools had doubled ; that more than \$2,000,000 had been spent in providing better schoolhouses ; that the wages of men as teachers had increased 62 per cent, of women 51 per cent, while the whole number of women employed as teachers had increased 54 per cent ; one month had been added to the average length of the schools ; the ratio of private school expenditures to those of the public schools had diminished from 75 per cent to 36 per cent ; the compensation of school committees had been made compulsory, and their supervision was more general and more constant ; three normal schools had been established, and had sent out several hundred teachers, who were mak-

ing themselves felt in all parts of the State." (Martin's Education in Mass., p. 174).

In conclusion I suggest again the thought of Mr. Mann as a character inspired with missionary zeal to reform society by means of the school system. It was this missionary zeal that led him to advocate in the Massachusetts legislature the first insane asylum, and secure its establishment—to favor the establishment of asylums for deaf, dumb, and blind ; to secure normal schools, humane school discipline, methods of instruction that appeal to the child's interest and arouse him to self-activity, and finally to devote the evening of his life to the Antioch college experiment.

It is this missionary zeal for the school that works so widely and in so many followers to-day ; what enthusiastic teacher is not proud to be called a disciple of Horace Mann ?































































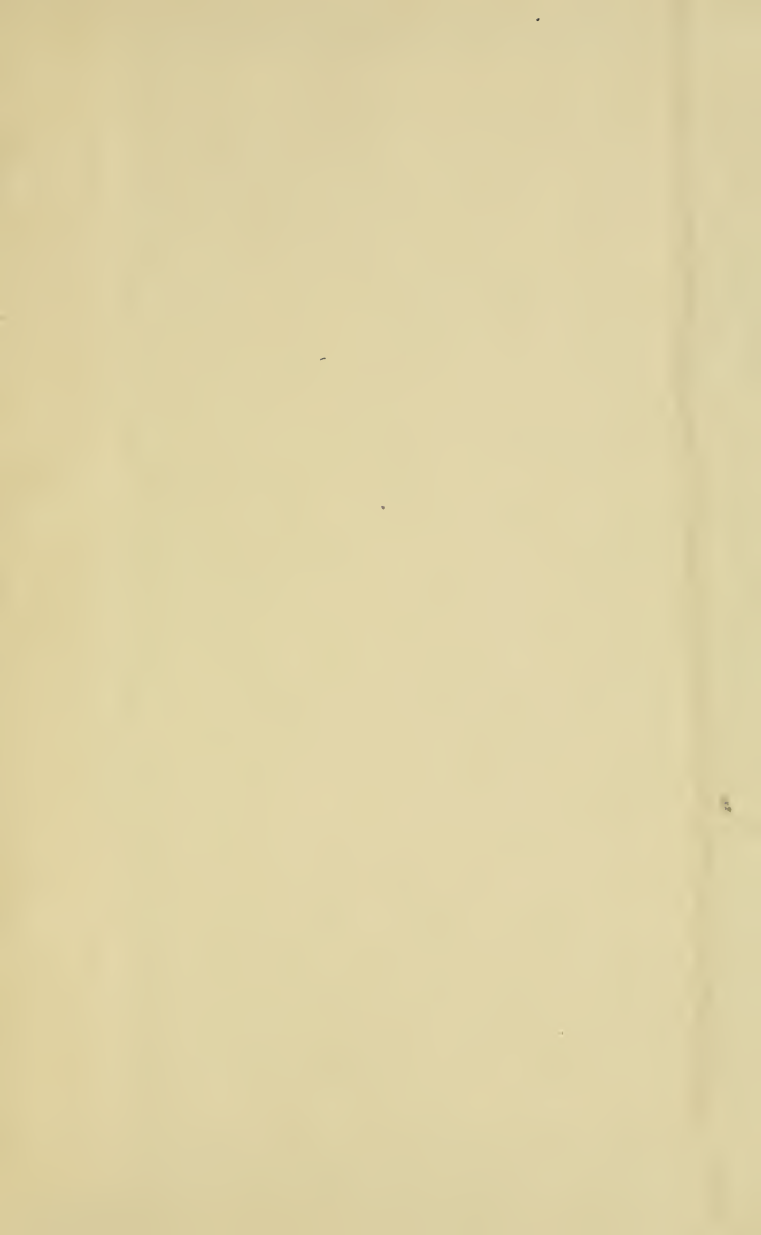












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